



PRESS RELEASE – 2022 COUNTY ELECTIONS

The reform of social welfare and healthcare (sote-uudistus) will enter into force on 1 January 2023. In the reform, responsibility for organising social welfare and healthcare services and rescue services will be transferred from municipalities to 21 wellbeing services counties. However, the City of Helsinki is neither a wellbeing services county nor a part of any wellbeing services county, and it will take care of its social welfare and healthcare services and rescue services on its own.

Wellbeing services counties are public law entities separate from municipalities and the state and have self-government in their territory. Finland will be divided into wellbeing services counties mainly based on the current regions. There will be four wellbeing services counties in the Region of Uusimaa.

The highest decision-making wellbeing services county body is the county council, which is elected by its residents. The members of the county council, i.e., the councillors, are elected in county elections.

The first county elections will take place on **Sunday 23 January 2022**. The term of office of the county council elected in them will begin at the beginning of March 2022 and continue until the end of May 2025. From 2025, county elections will be held at the same time as municipal elections.

In county elections, Finnish citizens and, under specific conditions, citizens of other countries may vote and stand as candidates.

Voting in Finland is voluntary.

No county elections will be held in the City of Helsinki and the Region of Åland.

Voting rights – who is entitled to vote

You may vote in county elections if you are a citizen of Finland, another European Union member state, Iceland or Norway and you meet the following conditions:

- you have turned 18 by election day (23 January 2022)
- You have a municipality of residence in Finland, in a municipality that belongs to a wellbeing services county on 3 December 2021

If you are a citizen of some other country, you may vote in the county elections if:

- you have turned 18 by election day (23 January 2022)
- You have a municipality of residence in Finland, in a municipality that belongs to a wellbeing services county on 3 December 2021
- you have had a municipality of residence in *one* of the regions of Finland continuously for at least two years before 3 December 2021

Your municipality of residence is determined on the basis of the Municipality of Residence Act. In principle, your municipality of residence is the municipality you live in. Your municipality of residence also determines which wellbeing services county you belong to, i.e., in which wellbeing services county you are entitled to vote in county elections. In the county elections, you may only vote for a candidate standing for election in your wellbeing services county.

In the county elections of 2022, your municipality of residence will be determined on the basis of the municipality that has been recorded as your municipality of residence in the Population Information System on 3 December 2021 at 12:00 midnight.

If necessary, you can check your municipality of residence from the Digital and Population Data Services Agency.

A notification of the right to vote is sent to all persons entitled to vote

The Digital and Population Data Services Agency maintains a voting register containing the information of all those entitled to vote. There is no need to register for the voting register separately.

The Digital and Population Data Services Agency will send a notification card informing you of your right to vote by **30 December 2021** at the latest. The card is sent to each person who is entitled to vote and whose address is known. Your notification card will be sent to you in digital form if you have signed up for the Suomi.fi Messages service, which is provided by the Digital and Population Data Services Agency (for more information, visit www.suomi.fi/messages).

The notice of right to vote contains instructions on voting, information on your election day polling station, information on the tasks of the county council and a list of advance polling stations close to your place of residence. You do not need to bring your notice of right to vote to the polling station, but you will need to prove your identity before casting your vote.

Eligibility – who may stand as a candidate?

You can stand as a candidate in your wellbeing services county if you meet the following conditions:

- your municipality of residence belongs to the wellbeing services county in whose council you intend to stand as a candidate
- you have the right to vote in a wellbeing services county
- you have not been declared legally incompetent by a court decision.

Please note that certain state officials, leading county officials and employees listed in the “Laki hyvinvointialueesta” (In English: Act on Wellbeing Services Counties; no English translation) may not stand as candidates in county elections.

Nomination of candidates for county elections

In county elections, candidates may be nominated by

- registered parties
- constituency associations established by eligible voters.

Each party may decide on its own candidates in accordance with its rules and regulations. If you wish to stand as a party candidate, you must discuss the matter with your preferred party.

The establishment of a constituency association requires at least 50 eligible voters who reside in the wellbeing services county in question.

Two or more parties have the right to form an electoral alliance. Two or more constituency associations have the right to set up a joint list.

The number of candidates nominated by a party, electoral alliance or joint list in a wellbeing services county may exceed the total number of councillors to be elected by a factor of 1.25 at most. 59 to 79 delegates are elected to the councils on the basis of the population of the wellbeing services county.

Each candidate will be assigned a number. A master list of candidates will be drawn up, on which all the candidates will be shown in numerical order, starting from number 2. On the master list, the candidates are grouped by party and joint list. The master list will contain the following information for each candidate: their name, candidate number and title/occupation/profession and the municipality of residence. In addition, the master list will indicate

- which parties have formed an electoral alliance
- which constituency associations have set up a joint list
- which parties do not belong to an electoral alliance
- which candidates are running outside the joint list.

The master list of candidates will be drawn up in all wellbeing services counties on 23 December 2021. Your wellbeing services county’s master list is available in, for example, the polling booths and on the election pages of the Ministry of Justice (www.vaalit.fi). If you vote in advance outside the area of your own wellbeing services county, you can ask the election official for a candidate book listing the details of the candidates in all wellbeing services counties.

Voting dates

You can vote either on election day on Sunday, 23 January 2022, or before election day during the advance voting period. You may cast your vote only once. Voting twice is a punishable offence under the Criminal Code.

Advance voting:

Advance voting begins on **Wednesday, 12 January 2022**.

Advance voting abroad ends on **Saturday, 15 January 2022**, and in Finland on **Tuesday, 18 January 2022**. At some advance polling stations, the voting period is shorter.

You can vote in advance at any polling station in Finland or abroad. The following may function as advance polling stations:

- advance polling stations in Finland that have been designated by municipalities, e.g., municipal offices
- several Finnish missions abroad
- institutions, such as hospitals, social welfare units, and correctional institutions. Only those who are patients or serving a sentence at these institutions may vote there.
- Finnish ships that are abroad during the advance voting period. Only the ship's personnel may vote while at sea, passengers may not vote on ships.

Voting on election day:

On election day, voting will take place on **Sunday, 23 January 2022, between 9 am and 8 pm**.

On election day, you may vote only at the polling station marked on the voting right notification that has been sent to you.

Voting from home:

If your ability to move or function is limited to the extent that you cannot reach the polling station without unreasonable difficulty, you can vote from home during the advance voting period.

You must register to vote from home by **Tuesday 11 January 2022** before 4 pm. To register, contact the central municipal election board of your municipality of residence. The board's contact details can be found on your notice of right to vote. Under certain conditions, a family caregiver who lives in the same household may vote at the same time.

Voting by mail:

If you will be abroad during the entire advance voting period and on election day, you can also vote by mail from abroad.

To vote by mail, order the necessary voting material from the Ministry of Justice's online service to your address abroad. Orders can be placed no earlier than three months before

election day. As a person entitled to vote, you are responsible for ordering the necessary voting documents in due time so that you can return your ballot in its covering envelope to your municipality's central municipal election board within the time specified in the Election Act.

How to vote

To cast your vote during the advance voting period or on election day, go to your local polling station. You may only vote for one of the candidates listed in the master list of candidates in your wellbeing services county.

1) Prove your identity to the election official by showing your passport, identity card, driving licence or other similar document. The election official will give you a ballot.

2) Go to the polling booth. Only one person may enter a polling booth at a time.

3) Mark the number of the candidate you are voting for on your ballot. You can only vote for one candidate. Write the number of your candidate in the circle on the ballot. Do not write or draw anything else on your ballot. Fold the ballot so that the number you wrote remains inside and is not visible to anyone else.

4) Take your folded ballot to the election official. They will stamp the ballot.

5a) If you are voting on election day, drop your stamped ballot in the ballot box.

5b) If you are voting in advance, the election official will give you an election envelope in which you will seal your stamped ballot.

If your ability to write a candidate's number on the ballot is significantly impaired, you may request a polling assistant of your choice or an election official to help you cast your vote. Your assistant may not be a candidate or a close relative of a candidate. Your assistant will be obliged to maintain the secrecy of your ballot, i.e., to keep any information related to your vote a secret.

Further information

- For more information on the elections, please contact the central municipal election board of your municipality.
Any questions concerning personal voting rights can be submitted to the Digital and Population Data Services Agency.
The contact details of both are available on your voting right notification.
- The addresses and opening hours of advance polling stations, instructions for ordering a mail-in vote, information on candidates and other election information can be found on the election website of the Ministry of Justice at **www.vaalit.fi**.
- Information on the candidates standing in the county elections can be found on the election pages of the Ministry of Justice after 23 December 2021. Information on advance polling stations will be made available after 5 November 2021.

Digital and Population Data Services Agency, 12.10.2021